



Photos by SrA. Jeff Capenos

Nora Miller plays a game of bingo with children in the school age child care room,



Cool tunes and a steady hand helps Amanda Parsons eye up her next shot on the center's new pool tables.

*Lakenheath children
get boundless futures
with grand opening of*

Youth Center

**By Capt. Launa Hall
48th Services Squadron**

From the rock climbing to computers, RAF Lakenheath's youth's have a new place to go when it comes to their spare time.

The community's children now have a brand new 21,150 square-foot Youth Center, which celebrates its grand opening Saturday. The celebration commences with a ribbon cutting at 11 a.m. and lasts until 5 p.m. with demonstrations, booths, free food, free balloons for every child, and prize drawings every fifteen minutes.

"The wait for the new \$4.3 million building was definitely worth it," said Lt. Col. Michael O'Dell, 48th Services Squadron commander. "It's a wonderful facility for our children, and not one dime of government funds went into buying it. It was completely funded by the revenue generated by our own services programs and AAFES facilities. Our people's money is coming right back to them."

The old youth center, recently demolished, was too small for the 300 children the youth center serves daily, said Heidi Welch, 48th SVS Family Member Support Flight chief. "The new center gives each age-group space for their own programs, and we've recently

added many new programs.

"We even have a room reserved just for teens with a television and a stereo system. There is something here for all youth, ages six through eighteen," Welch added. "We hope everyone will stop by our grand opening to see what we have to offer."

New programs include instructional classes in gymnastics, dance, martial arts, and rock climbing on an indoor eight meter tall climbing wall, known as "the Radical Rock." The facility also features a gym, classrooms, dance room, music room, and a computer room where the children can join a computer club or engage in computer classes.

During the celebration there will be a "Radical Rock" demonstration, performances by the RAF Lakenheath Middle School Band, the Spectrum Dance Team and the RAF Lakenheath High School Cheerleaders, a martial arts demonstration, a ventriloquist and a magic show.

The day will end with a pre-teen dance from 6 - 7:30 p.m., and a teen dance from 8 - 11 p.m. Prizes donated by AT&T, Ballygowan, and CableCom, sponsors of the Youth Center grand opening, will be drawn every fifteen minutes. The grand prize is a brand new bicycle and helmet donated by the Pedaler Bike Shop (The winner must be present to win.)



Above: Nigel Gholston (left) and Thomas Stahl (right) shoot off some steam in the youth center's video arcade area.

Left: Jason Allen, a youth center regular slides across the gym floor during free time there.



Chris Price gets on line and plays some games in the youth center's new computer room.